

## Message Text

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60/43

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /059 W

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P R 081450Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6403

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR GARBLED THROUGHOUT TEXT

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UK, PINT, OCON

SUBJECT: CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCE: THIRD DAY (10/7)

REF: LONDON 16059

SUMMARY. THIRD DAY OF CONSERVATIVE CONFERENCE PRODUCED  
A FEW HIGHSPOTS, WITH FOCUSSED INCREASINGLY DURING THE  
DAY ON EVENTS OUTSIDE CONFERENCE HALL, INCLUDING NEXT  
WEEK'S ECONOMIC DEBATE. SHADOW SPOKESMAN ON FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS MAUDLING, UNDER ATTACK FROM FLOOR (UNPRECEDENTED  
IN THIS CONFERENCE AT LEAST), GAVE TEMPERED AND RESTRAIN-  
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ED RESPONSE TO CONFERENCE SPEAKERS WHO EMPHASIZED

GROWING SOVIET MILITARY AND NAVAL MIGHT AND DEFICIENCIES IN BRITISH DEFENSES. INDUSTRY SPOKESMAN HESELTINE RECEIVED VERY WARM RECEPTION FROM CONFERENCE FOR HIS ATTACKS ON LABOR GOVERNMENT, WITH SUITABLE REFERENCES TO RED FLAG. SENIOR STATESMAN LORD CARRINGTON GAVE AUDIBLE PARTY SUPPORT TO USE OF REFERENDUM IN DEVOLUTION DEBATE.

OUTSIDE CONFERENCE MAJOR INTEREST WAS ON DEVOLUTION WITH FRINGE DEBATE BETWEEN TWO SCOTTISH MPS. WITH ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON LENDING RATE, CONSERVATIVES WELCOMED GOVERNMENT'S AGREEMENT TO ECONOMIC DEBATE ON MONDAY, ALTHOUGH CONSERVATIVES WANTED TWO DAYS. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, MRS. THATCHER'S WIND-UP SPEECH ON 4TH DAY BECOMES ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT, SHE DEVOTED SERIOUS ATTENTION TO HER SPEECH YESTERDAY, CANCELLING SOME CONFERENCE APPEARANCES BECAUSE OF MEETINGS WITH HER SHADOW CABINET MEMBERS AND WITH HER ADVISERS AND WRITERS. END SUMMARY

1. REGINALD MAULDING, SHADOW SPOKESMAN ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WENT INTO THE HISTORY BOOK OF CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCES ON THIRD DAY OF THE 1976 CONFERENCE AS ONE OF THE FEW (IF NOT THE ONLY) FRONT-BENCH PARTY LEADERS TO BE ATTACKED FROM THE FLOOR BY A CONFERENCE DELEGATE AND ENCOURAGED TO RESIGN. THE INCIDENT OCCURRED DURING THE CONFERENCE DEBATE ON DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. IN TYPICAL FASHION, MAUDLING IGNORED THE CRITICISM AND PLOWED HIS WAY RELENTLESSLY THROUGH AN OLYMPIAN VIEW OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INCLUDING DETENTE SEEN LARGELY IN TERMS OF ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DISARMAMENT.

2. INDUSTRY SPOKESMAN HESELTINE MADE HIS OWN MARK, BUT OF AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT SORT. THE CONFERENCE WELCOMED HIS ENTHUSIASTICALLY AND RESPONDED TO HIS SPEECH WITH HEARTY APPLAUSE, RISING IN SPONTANEOUS OVATION. CONFERENCE WAS SHOWING ITS APPROVAL NOT ONLY OF HESELTINE'S REMARKS BUT OF HIS EARLIER NON-TORY DEFIANCE OF PARLIAMENTARY TRADITION IN BRANDISHING THE MACE AT THE RED FLAG CHORUS. THE SAME KIND OF OVATION WAS GIVEN HESELTINE LATER AT THE CONFERENCE BALL.

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3. MORE SUBSTANCE AND LESS SHOW WAS INVOLVED IN THE CONFERENCE'S "FREE" DEBATE ON UNSCHEDULED TOPICS. WHILE IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT ALL THE SPEAKERS CHOSEN WERE IN AGREEMENT WITH THE PARTY'S DEVOLUTION STANCE AND NO ANTI-DEVOLUTIONISTS WERE CALLED, FOR SOME STRANGE REASON, THE DEBATE ITSELF HAD A SPARK OF PASSION MISSING IN OTHER PROGRAMMED DEBATES. AS A RESULT, THE COOL

DISPASSIONATE REMARKS OF LORD CARRINGTON FROM THE PODIUM  
WERE ALL THE MORE EFFECTIVE. INTERESTINGLY, CARRINGTON  
GAVE THE FIRST INDICATION THAT THE PARTY TOO, ALONG  
WITH EX-LEADERS HEATH AND HUME, DOES NOT RULE OUT THE  
POSSIBLE USE OF SOME KIND OF REFERENDUM IN THE DEVOLUTION  
ISSUE.

4. THE MOST INTERESTING OF THE FRINGE EVENTS WAS LAST  
NIGHT'S DEBATE ON DEVOLUTION SPONSORED BY THE CONSERVATIVE  
STUDENTS WHO SUCCEEDED IN GETTING TWO EXPOSED SCOT TORIES

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TO MAKE THEIR PRESENTATIONS FOR AND AGAINST DEVOLUTION  
(RIFKIND AND TAYLOR RESPECTIVELY). A LOT OF SCOT MPS  
HAD  
MADE THE EFFORT TO TURN UP IN BRIGHTON, HOPING FOR AN  
AIRING OF THE ISSUE BEFORE THE ENGLISH AND WELSH TORIES.  
SINCE ONLY A FEW SCOT TORIES WERE ABLE TO SPEAK IN THE  
CONFERENCE, AND SINCE THE CONFERENCE MANAGERS CLEARLY  
WANTED TO AVOID ANY TRULY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE, A LOT OF  
FRUSTRATION AND BEWILDERMENT GREW UP AMONG DELEGATES,  
PROBABLY FURTHER COMPLICATING THE PARTY'S PROBLEM IN  
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REACHING A DEFENSIBLE AND UNIFIED POSITION.

5. BEHIND THE CONFERENCE FACADE, THERE WAS MUCH STIRRING  
ON THE CONSERVATIVE REQUEST FOR DEBATE TIME WHEN PARLIA-  
MENT OPENS NEXT WEEK. WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE IN-  
CREASE IN THE PRIME LENDING RATE AND THE GOVERNMENT'S  
WILLINGNESS TO DEVOTE ONE BUT NOT TWO DAYS TO AN ECONOMIC  
DEBATE, THE FLURRY OF ACTIVITY INTENSIFIED. ELECTION TALK  
IS DEFINITELY IN THE AIR, SOME OF IT DELIBERATELY SET OUT  
FOR TACTICAL REASONS. CONFERENCE DELEGATES HAVE, HOW-  
EVER, NO DOUBTS ABOUT THEIR READINESS FOR AN ELECTION AND  
THEIR EAGERNESS FOR ONE, BASED ON THE CONVICTION THAT AN  
ELECTION TIDE IS RUNNING TOWARDS THE CONSERVATIVES.  
"THE RIGHT APPROACH" HAS BEEN ALMOST UNIFORMLY ENDORSED  
BY CONFERENCE. WHEN CRITICIZED, IT WAS PRIMARILY IN  
TERMS OF NOT BEING TOUGH ENOUGH. MRS. THATCHER HAS BEEN  
HEAVILY ENGAGED WITH SHADOW CABINET MEMBERS, SPEECH  
WRITERS, AND ADVISORS, EVEN TO THE EXTENT OF CANCELLING  
SOME CONFERENCE APPEARANCES. SHE IS QUITE AWARE OF THE  
IMPORTANCE OF STRIKING EXACTLY THE RIGHT NOTE BOTH AS A  
WIND-UP TO A CONFERENCE WHICH HAD NOT ALWAYS BEEN EASY  
AND AS A PRELUDE TO NEXT WEEK'S EVENTS IN WESTMINSTER.

ARMSTRONG

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